

The Return of El by **XxPurpleStars3xx**

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Summary:

A mysterious girl is found in the woods. Hopper knows exactly who she is and brings her straight to the person she wants to see most.

The Return of El

Hopper had gotten a call on his radio while sitting at his desk at one p.m. on a Saturday afternoon.

“Yeah, Chief, we found a girl wandering around the forest. She won’t talk and we’re bringing her in.”

Hopper’s eyes immediately widened and his heart quickened. It couldn’t be...could it?

Ten minutes later, the two policemen had brought in a girl with a very dirty pink dress and blue jacket with brown locks to her chin. Her head hung low. It had been a year since her mysterious disappearance, and he knew it still bothered Mike Wheeler.

Everyone knew he had liked her no matter how much he lied about it.

“El?” he asked the girl timidly.

“You know this girl?” one of the men asked.

“El?” Hopper tried again, a little louder.

The girl known as Eleven looked up and her eyes brightened at Hopper’s face. She immediately hugged him and started crying. Hopper looked to his guys and nodded for them to go away. He took Eleven into the bathroom and cleaned her up before they went back into his office.

“Eleven, are you okay?” he asked her.

She shook her head.

“Demogorgon,” she said. “Upside down.”

He hugged her tight again and she started crying again. He tried to calm her down.

“Hey, you’re here now, okay? And you’re okay and you don’t have to

talk about it if you don't want to. Understand?"

Eleven nodded.

"Mike?" she asked.

Hopper smiled and nodded.

"Let's go see the Wheeler boy," he said.

He got into his truck with Eleven.

"Thanks for the Eggo's," she said.

"No problem, kid," he replied.

The short drive to Wheeler house was met with silence besides the sound of October rain. Hopper knocked on door and Nancy answered after a few minutes.

"Hopper, is everything okay?" Nancy asked. She hadn't seen the thirteen-year-old girl hiding behind the cop.

"Yeah, great, actually," Hopper replied. "I want you to meet someone."

"Oh?"

"Nancy, this is Eleven."

Hopper brought the once-missing girl out from behind him and Nancy started crying, hugging the girl.

"Who else knows?" Nancy said.

"No one but you and me and some guys at the station," Hopper answered.

"Mike?" El asked.

Nancy smiled and nodded, bringing the girl to the basement door, where she knew the four boys were playing Dungeons & Dragons.

"It's the Demogorgon!" Lucas shouted, and Eleven suddenly got very nervous.

"D-Dem—"

"It's just the game they're playing," Nancy whispered. "Go ahead downstairs."

"No! Come on, not again!" Dustin shouted, and Eleven smiled at her friend's voice.

Nancy went downstairs first with Eleven following a few steps behind.

"Demogorgon get played again?" Nancy said.

"It doesn't get any better after last year," Will replied.

"Nancy, what's the problem?" Mike asked. "You and Steve need alone time again?"

"No," Nancy said, "I just wanted you to know Mike has a visitor."

Mike was confused. Who would want to see him?

"Maybe the other three, too," Nancy added after a moment.

Realization dawned on the four boys who made a loud amount of noise getting out of their chairs before Eleven came down the stairs.

"El," Mike whispered softly.

"Mike," Eleven whispered back with tears in her eyes.

After a moment of silence, the two grabbed onto each other for dear life, like if Mike let go of her then she might disappear into the unknown again.

"I'm just gonna go," Nancy said, going upstairs.

"Okay, my turn," Dustin said, pulling Mike away from El and giving her a hug.

Then Lucas did the same and Will introduced himself and thanked her.

“So, where were you?” Mike turned back to Eleven.

“Upside down,” Eleven said.

The four boys froze and Will hugged her tight.

“A lot of hugging,” she said.

“You’ve been gone for a year and you don’t expect that?” Lucas asked.

“We’ve all missed you like crazy,” Mike said.

“Mike especially,” Dustin teased.

Eleven smiled at her friends.

“So, are you here for good?” Mike said. Eleven nodded. “Well, we’ll have to find you a bed. I mean, you can’t stay in the fort for years on end. And Mom—Oh my gosh, Mom!”

“Hey, guys. Joyce just called, it’s time for—“ Karen Wheeler came down the stairs and stopped when she saw the girl. “Oh, who’s this?”

“El. Her name’s Eleven, but El for short,” Mike explained.

“Hi, hon, where are you parents?”

El stayed silent, looking at Karen, remembering what he had said about his parents being hers and Nancy being her new sister.

“Well, she doesn’t have any. I knew her last year and I was thinking she could stay here,” Mike said.

His mom pursed her lips.

“And if not my mom would gladly take her in,” Will said, seeing how it definitely would not go Mike’s way.

“I think that’d probably be better,” Mike’s mom said.

“Your mom?” El asked.

Will nodded.

“But let’s get you a nice hot shower and some of Nancy’s clothes, first. It looks like you haven’t been in a shower for months,” Mrs. Wheeler suggested.

Eleven nodded, not wanting her to know how much that was true. Mike smiled and looked towards the other boys.

“So, you’re happy,” Lucas said.

“El’s back, why wouldn’t I be?”

“And now you can take her to the Snow Ball,” Dustin said.

“Shut up.”

The boys were making kissy faces.

“I better go call my mom and tell her Eleven’s coming home with me,” Will said, heading upstairs to use the phone.

“Okay, dude,” Mike said. “But I’m coming over tomorrow.”

“Let’s be honest, he’ll spend more time at your house than his,” Lucas teased.

Mike blushed.

“It’s not like that,” he lied.

“Oh, please, we’ve known since the moment you said she could stay in your house you’ve basically been in love with her,” Dustin said.

They started making kissy faces at him again. Mike ignored them.

Eleven stood in the shower for a long time, taking time to shampoo and condition her hair, getting the months of dirt off of her body, and trying to stay in Mike’s house as long as possible.

“Eleven? You okay?” Nancy called from the other side of the

bathroom door.

“Yes,” Eleven called back.

“I’ve got some clothes for tonight. We’ll go shopping after school tomorrow, okay?”

“Okay.”

“So I’m just going to open the door and put the pajamas on the toilet. Don’t freak out, okay?”

“Yes.”

Nancy opened the door and quickly put the clothes on the toilet, taking her ripped, once-pink dress from the bathroom floor and closed the door again.

When El thought she was clean enough she turned the handle the opposite way she had seen Mike’s mother turn it to get the water flowing, and the water stopped. She took the towel off the rack that Mrs. Wheeler had left for her and put on the clothes that she had been given.

“Thank you,” El said, coming into Nancy’s room. “Sorry about the dress.”

“As long as you’re safe,” Nancy replied, hugging the wet girl tight.

“Eleven, you’re going to live in my house,” Will said, coming up the stairs to Nancy’s room. Eleven nodded. “She’ll be here in a few minutes so better say goodbye to the boys.”

“Even Mike?”

Will smiled and nodded.

“Even Mike. Though you’ll see him tomorrow after school,” he said.

“No, we’re going shopping. She’ll see him the day after,” Nancy corrected. “No doubt he’ll be over at your house much more than his own, obviously.”

Will laughed and turned to Eleven.

“Come on, let’s go say goodnight to the boys.”

Eleven nodded and went downstairs to the first floor where the three boys were now waiting for her. She thanked Karen and hugged each other of the boys.

She hugged Mike tighter and longer than she did Lucas or Dustin.

“I’m glad you’re home,” he whispered to her, just like that night she returned to them a year ago.

“Me too,” she whispered back.

Joyce’s car came rolling up the Wheeler’s driveway and she raced to the doorway. The door opened and she hugged Eleven tight, pulling her away from Mike.

“You’re okay,” Joyce said.

“Yes,” Eleven said.

“You’re okay and you’re going to live with me and Will and Jonathan, okay?” Eleven nodded. “Good. Goodnight boys.”

“El and I are going shopping tomorrow,” Nancy said, coming down the stairs, “so don’t make any plans.”

“But, I was—“ Mike said.

“Michael, I think she needs clothes more than she needs to see you,” Karen interrupted.

Mike sighed and nodded.

“The day after, though? Or she can come over here for dinner.”

El smiled at the boy who had taken her in when she ran away from the lab.

“We’ll talk,” Joyce said. “I’ll take her home.”

“Home?” There was hope in El’s voice. There was a small smile that had barely ever been there the year before.

“Yes, honey. Home.” Joyce smiled and took the girl’s hand, leading Eleven and Will out to the car.

Mike waved goodbye to the Byers through the open window. He turned around to find his family and friends looking at him with big smiles on his faces.

“Oh shut up,” Mike said, knowing his face was a deep burnt shade of red.

“I’m gonna need the car tomorrow if I’m going to take El shopping,” Nancy said, turning to her mother. “And I know for a fact that Will’s mom doesn’t get off work tomorrow until eight at night.”

“Fine,” Karen said. “But be home by dinner.”

Nancy nodded and went upstairs.

“Okay, dude, it’s getting late. We should probably head home,” Lucas said, turning to Dustin. “Plus, you need your beauty rest if your lady love’s coming over for dinner tomorrow.”

“I guess she’s already met one of the parents. Why not the other one?” Dustin joked.

Mike basically pushed his two best friends—still laughing hysterically—out the door and locked it for the night. He smiled to himself.

Because Eleven was back.

Because he wouldn’t have to wonder if she was ever coming back or if she really had died.

Because he would see her tomorrow, and the rest of his life.